DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 137 868 CS 501 676

AUTHOR Craig, Robert; And Others
TITLE The Process of Coorientation Toward a Definition of the Situation.
PUB DATE Dec 76
NOTE 30p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Speech Communication Association (62nd, San Francisco, December 1976)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$2.06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College Students; *Communication (Thought Transfer); *Communication Problems; *Interaction Process Analysis; *Interpersonal Relationship; *Orientation; Performance Factors
IDENTIFIERS *Coorientation

ABSTRACT

The concept of definition of the situation is rooted in the view that human behavior is affected by the environment only indirectly, via the person's image or cognitive map. As a communication concept, however, definition of the situation must also have a relational aspect; an interaction process depends, in part, on the relationship between the differing definitions of situation of the participants. Ninety undergraduates participated in a study which examined how the coorientation state (relationship between actors' definitions of situation) influenced communication behavior. In particular, the study examined differences between communicative behavior of dyads with low consensus on situational definition, dyads with a minimal definition of the situation, and dyads with a detailed high definition of the situation. An analysis based on McHugh's conceptualization of things said in defining the situation indicated that trends of messages which define the situation are predictable. Implications for further research using this paradigm are discussed. (Author/AA)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED137868

The Process of Coorientation Toward A Definition of the Situation

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

Robert Craig
Bonnie Johnson
Marcia Shaw

Department of Speech Communication
The Pennsylvania State University

Presented at the Annual Convention of the Speech Communication Association, San Francisco, December 29, 1976

Acknowledgements. The following people made substantial contributions to the design and conduct of this research: Robert Buday, Jeffrey Fair, Gary Kleeblatt, Joan Kosmac, Robert Miller, John Rice, Aaron Schiller, and Patricia Wirtz. This research was partially funded by the College of Liberal Arts, facilities provided by the College of Business Administration, The Pennsylvania State University.

Abstract

The concept of definition of the situation is rooted ultimately in the cognitive view that human behavior is affected by the environment only indirectly, via the person's image or cognitive map. As a communication concept, however, definition of the situation must also have a relational aspect. My behavior depends upon my definition and your behavior on yours, but our interaction process depends, in part, on the relationship between those two definitions. Previous research has not in any systematic way considered this coorientational aspect of the communication process of constructing a definition of the situation. The paper develops this point of view, derives specific hypotheses combining the coorientation model with McHugh's conceptualization of things said in defining the situation, and presents an experimental study. The results indicate that the trends over time of messages which define the situation are predictable, and point the way to further research in line with this new paradigm.

CS 501 674

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Robert Craig
Bonnie Johnson
TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Marcia Shaw
TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER.

THE PROCESS OF COORIENTATION
TOWARD A DEFINITION OF THE SITUATION

Robert T. Craig
Bonnic McD. Johnson
Marcia Shaw

The Pennsylvania State University

Introduction

The theoretical basis for the research reported in this paper is the proposition that coorientation toward a definition of the situation is fundamental to the human communication process. Our discussion of that proposition progresses from the general to the specific. First we discuss the proposition in the broadest theoretical context; then we derive hypotheses in view of a set of models; then we describe the specific procedures of a study designed to test those hypotheses.

Theoretical Background

The concept of definition of the situation is most broadly grounded in a cognitive view of human behavior, especially in that branch of the cognitive view know as constructivism. The cognitive view holds that human behavior is only indirectly a function of the environment; the effect of the environment is mediated by the image or cognitive map of the environment held by the organism. Constructivism stresses, in addition, that the formation of the image is an active process of "construing" or making sense of the environment. Psychological and sociological traditions converge on the conclusion that all of this is in the service of our need to render our world predictable. George A. Kelly (1963), from whom we get the term constructivism, says that we channel our activities by anticipating events, and we anticipate events by construing their replications. So we act upon the world not quite as it is but as we imagine it to be based on past experience. In all our activities we are like scientists, testing our hypotheses about the world. George H. Mead (1938) speaks of the object (meaning, more plainly, someone's concept of an object) as a "collapsed act" (pp. 368-370). Our image of the world is formed in terms of our experience of acting; we see things from the standpoint of their responses to our actions.

The term "definition of the situation" was introduced by W. I. Thomas (1967) to refer to "a stage of examination and deliberation" that occurs "preliminary to any self-determined act of behavior" (p. 315). So conceived the term is coexistence with cognitive construction, but in actual use in the social sciences the term has come to refer specifically to our construction of social situations as such. We interact with others on the basis of an assumption as to the "kind" of situation we are in. This definition of the situation implies roles for the interactants and lends the situation an air of familiarity and a normative texture. Given a definition of the situation, the interactants' behavior is meaningful, predictable, normal.

A new element emerges when we consider the phenomenon of cognitive construction in a specifically social context. Where we are necessarily concerned not just with the construction or cognitive map of a single person, but also with the relationships

among several cognitive maps. My behavior depends upon my definition of the situation and your behavior on yours, but the process of our interaction will proceed in rather different ways as a function, first of all, of the similarity of those two definitions. Previous research has recognized the centrality of definition of the situation in human communication, but has not very systematically taken account of this additional, relational aspect.

A school of social psychology growing from the seminal work of Erving Goffman (1959, 1961, 1967 and others) has considered the goal of maintaining a sense of definition as a central concern of people in interaction. Goffman and his followers have examined the nature of the "working consensus" that interactants maintain and the consequences, such as embarrassment and alienation, of a disruption of that consensus. The working consensus is

> ...the structure of social encounters--the structure of those entities in social life that come into being whenever persons enter one another's immediate physical presence. The key factor in this structure is the maintenance of a single definition of the situation, this definition having to be expressed, and this expression sustained in the face of a multitude of potential disruptions (Goffman, 1959: 254).

Goffman sees people as basically cooperating with one another to sustain the smooth and meaningful enactment of encounters. His study of that process has produced a variety of suggestive concepts: self-presentation, teamwork, alienation from interaction and role distance, to name a few. The inhabitants of Goffman's world, however, are rather insecure types, perhaps excessively worried that a false note might be struck in their encounters. Further, Goffman has given no attention to a systematic description of the communication processes by which definitions are constructed. The whole subject must be given a more operational treatment so that results can be more easily replicated by other investigators.

A recent laboratory experiment by Fink and Edison (1976) is in the theoretical tradition of Goffman and may be regarded as an attempt to systematically describe the communication processes of defining the situation. Specifically, Fink and Edison looked at the effects of amount of situational definition on several communication variables. Amount of definition was defined as the amount of information that an individual has about three components of the social situation: self identity, other identity and normative structure. High and low definition situations were experimentally created by varying the amount of information the person was given concerning the three components. Subjects interacted with a confederate of the experimenter whose responses were held constant. The conversations were videotaped and the tapes were content analyzed. Predicted differences were observed between the experimental conditions in amounts of self-awareness, providing normative definition, seeking normative definition, seeking other identity and providing self-identity, with all except the last higher in the low definition condition.

This study, in short, was a successful attempt to relate the gross "degree of definition" of a situation to the amount of communication which creates definition. The study, however, took place in a highly controlled "social situation." The study cannot fairly be said to have observed interaction; rather it observed the behavior of individuals in environments varying in degree of structure.

Peter McHugh (1968) has taken another approach toward the systematic description of the communication processes of defining the situation. McHugh sets himself the task of

> ...describing how a definition comes to be so given the existence of perspectives already determined by society, culture and reference group. It is a study of the devices by which meaning is assigned or not, rules are invoked or not, actors are made aware or not from which flows the substance and content of any particular interaction (p. 20).

The conceptual system that McHugh has for describing the process of definition is also a category scheme for communication content that functions to define situations. The main categories are emergence, statements that relate events across time to a central thread or theme, and relativity, statements that relate events across space, across the possibly differing standpoints of social actors. Several sub-categories are defined under the two general headings. The conceptualization is richer than that of Fink and Edison, but it performs the same general function of capturing, in the form of communication content, the cognitive process of defining the situation.

McHugh reports a very clever study in which his categories were used to analyze the talk of subjects who interacted with what was ostensibly a therapist but was actually a machine which replied with random yeses and noes to the subjects' questions. The study found, among other things, that emergence predominates during order (well defined interaction) and relativity predominates when order is disrupted.

McHugh's study is enormously interesting, but like that of Fink and Edison it cannot be said to describe genuine interaction. We have, once again, the process by which an individual defines his situation, not the process by which people in an encounter collectively define their situation.

Thus previous studies that we have reviewed have recognized the centrality of definition of the situation in human communication, but have studied that process either by relatively non-operational methods or by the systematic study of messages produced by individuals in highly artificial "social situations." Research is called for which would treat definition of the situation as a genuinely relational phenomenon.

We believe that study of the process of coorientation toward definition will substantially advance understanding of this area. The term coorientation was introduced by Newcomb (1953) to refer to the simultaneous orientation of persons toward each other and toward some external object or issue. Newcomb dealt mainly with motivational aspects of the interdependence of a person's orientations toward other people and attitude objects. More recent contributions (Laing, Phillipson and Lee, 1966; Scheff, 1967; McLeon and Chaffee, 1973), while not progressing much beyond Newcomb theoretically (in a strict sense), have considerably elaborated and enriched the conceptual model.

The coorientation model, it seems to us, touches on something very fundamental in human communication. The "spiral of reciprocal perspectives" described by Laing et al. is a particularly suggestive concept. We may describe the state of a communication system in terms of a set of reciprocal relations among the cognitions of the system members: do they agree? do they understand their degree of agreement? do they realize their degree of understanding? Whether

I assume that we agree will determine my behavior toward you; whether we actually agree will shape the further consequences of that behavior in our interaction. Communication is motivated, in part, by perceived coorientation states. The consequences of communication, depend, in part, on actual coorientation states. The process of communication may be described, for some purpose, as a sequence of coorientation states.

The communication process of defining the situation may be viewed, then, as a process of coorientation toward a definition by the members of a communication system. Since all social interaction depends on the definition of the situation, that process is fundamental to the human communication process in general. It was to advance understanding of that fundamental process that the research project reported in this paper was undertaken.

Design

From literature described above we have drawn two terms which are important in explaining the construction of meaning in social situations: definition of situation and coorientation state. We have related these terms hierarchically. That is, coorientation state refers to the tri-level relationship between definitions of situations of actors:

1. If two actors have similar definitions of situation, they have a coorientation state of "agreement"; if not their state is "disagreement."

2. If each actor knows the state of agreement or disagreement, they have a state of "understanding." If the actors believe that they agree (or disagree), but do not, then they have a state of "misunderstanding."

3. If the actors realize that they understand (or do not understand) the state of agreement-disagreement, then they have "realization." If not, then they have "failure to realize" (Laing, Phillipson and Lee, 1966).

It is widely believed that actors communicate in order to achieve agreement on the definition of a situation. Combining the concepts of coorientation and definition of a situation allows us to predict the order in which the process of accomplishing agreement should take place. Given the coorientation state marked by the lowest degree of consensus (failure to realize) the order of events should be:

(1) movement from failure to realize to realization (actors realize their misunderstanding or understanding);

(2) if misunderstanding, movement to understanding (actors understand that they disagree or agree);

(3) if disagreement, movement toward agreement (actors attempt to negotiate a shared definition).

Each of these three movements should be "disruptive" to the degree that

actors lack consensual expectations to provide stability in the interaction. The actors are "fishing" in one another's minds in the hope of finding a mutuality with which to sustain the conversation. A conversation so disruptive should be different than a conversation in which actors: (1) agree on the definition of the situation, (2) know that they agree (understand), and (3) realize that they understand their agreement.

Experimental Situation

Our task in this study was to create a situation in order to examine how the coorientation state (relationship between actors' definitions of situation) would influence communicative behavior. In particular, we wanted to test for differences between the communicative behavior of dyads with low consensus on situational definition, and dyads in which each person presumably had low definition of the situation.

We created three experimental conditions. In condition I both members of a dyad were given detailed instructions about how to conduct a brief conversation. We sought to provide them with high definition for their interaction. In particular, we told them the purpose for the talk and gave instructions about the means for accomplishing their purpose. Because the situation was highly defined for subjects' we expected no disruption in these conversations.

In condition II again each member was given detailed instructions to create high definition. But they were given different instructions about the purpose and means for accomplishing purpose. Our assumption was that in their realizing the misunderstanding and ultimately understanding the disagreement, their conversations would be "disrupted."

Condition III was a control condition or low definition situation. Replicating the Fink and Edison procedures, subjects were given neither specific purpose nor indication of any means. We assumed that there would be initial disruption in the conversation. We predicted, however, that even with a low level of external definition, dyads would soon negotiate their own and thus overcome the disruption.

Category System

McHugh's conceptualization of the talk with which people construct a definition of a situation provided the basis for our category system. We modified his basic system to fit our design. There are three major conceptual components of his system: emergence, relativity, and anomie. We originally thought that we might be able to create an "anomic" situation in which subjects would feel there was no intelligible purpose or means of accomplishing purpose. However, our experimental situation did not create a circumstance in which this extreme lack of situational definition was present. Therefore, we attempted to measure only relativity and emergence and we used some measures of nonverbal behaviors as possible indicators of "disruption" in situational definition.

Emergence is the term McHugh uses to describe the attempt to integrate or connect the temporal dimensions of an activity. Past, present, and future events, although temporally discrete, are integrated in a verbal theme. People create a pattern of events in their descriptions of them. Emergence is talk which describes

the influence of the past and expectations of the future on definitions the actor imposes on the present situation. Actors presume that what they have observed in the past will inform them about the future. That is, patterns of experience in the past may help them make order of the present. Conversely, actors also assume that they will be able to impose order on what occurs in the future. They assume that there is a pattern of meaning. Past and future are not distinct in their influence on present creations of meaning.

McHugh looked for the following kinds of expressions when subjects were talking about how they were interpreting their situation:

THEME: Subjects assume that there is a pattern of meaning to be discovered in the events they observe.
ELABORATION: The theme is "compounded and elaborated," by relating each event to others.
FIT: When events might be seen as contradictory, subjects see them as alternatives rather than seeing them as contradictory.
AUTHORSHIP: Subjects connect events to previous events and potential future events.
RELEVANCE: Subjects find the referents for events they observe in the meaningful theme developed up to that point; events are seen as relevant to what is believed to be happening.

We modified these to create the following six questions about the conversation:

CONFIDENCE: To what extent did the person you are watching seem to understand what was happening and appear to take the situation as routine?
AGREEMENT: To what extent did the person verbally or nonverbally express agreement with the other person's ideas?
ELABORATION: What proportion of the person's talk elaborated a point by giving details, support, rationales, etc.?
PERSONAL EXAMPLES: What proportion of the person's talk is spent in detailing personal examples?
SUMMARY OR REFERENCE TO THE PAST: To what extent did the person you watched summarize or make references to what had already been said in the conversation?
SUGGESTIONS OR REFERENCE TO FUTURE: How much did the person make suggestions (offer procedural instructions) about how the conversation should be conducted or forecast what will happen in the conversation?

We operationalized McHugh's concept of "theme with the question about "confidence." References to the past and future measured "authorship." "Agreement" was our measure of "fit." We added the category of "personal examples" both as an indicator of "fit" (in using personal examples a person is trying to talk about the fit of what is going on in the conversation with other egents of his life) and as an extension of the category of "elaboration." We did not attempt to measure McHugh's category of "relevance" except with the "confidence" category.

Relativity is the process of linking multiple realities. It is the sense that you are "there" and I am "here", leading to attempts to cross these realities, possibly with statements such as "What do you think?" and "My opinion is different than yours in that . . . ." According to McHugh relativity is talk concerned with

crossing the space between people. It is attention to the situation and the norms and roles appropriate to the situation. It is a sense of the "relativeness" of people and things to one another. It is coorientation at its most explicit level in that it is directly concerned with reciprocal perceptions of "how do you see this thing and how do I see it."

McHugh uses the following as indicators of relativity:

TYPICALITY: Subjects treat behavior as an instance of a class of behavior or as typical behavior.
LIKELIHOOD: Subjects assess the probability of behaviors they observe.
CAUSAL TEXTURE: Subjects point to phenomena as the causal agents of other phenomena.
TECHNICAL EFFICIENCY: Subjects assess the instrumental efficacy of a behavior in terms of a stated goal.
MORAL REQUIREDNESS: Subjects assess the necessity or rightness of behavior they observe.
SUBSTANTIVE CONGRUENCY: Subjects assess the other's behavior in terms of its accuracy, independent of moral judgment.

We did not find many of McHugh's categories to be directly applicable to the interactive setting we wished to describe. We used three different approaches to measuring relativity. The first approach was to assume that subjects would project their concerns about their relationship to one another and to the situation onto their descriptions of other people. We refer to the people talked about in a conversation as "characters." Hence we devised two questions:

PREDICTABILITY: To what extent did the person you are watching appear to regard the characters as predictable or normal?
RIGHTNESS: To what extent did the person you are watching make statements about what the characters ought to do or ought to have done?

These were indirect measures of statements referring to typicality, likelihood, and moral requiredness.

A second approach to measuring relativity was to examine ways in which subjects sought information about and matched their different positions. These questions are related to "assessing the accuracy of the partner's statement."

QUESTIONS: Did the person ask his partner questions?
CONTRASTS OPINIONS: Did the person disagree or contrast his opinion with the opinion of the partner?

The third approach to measuring relativity was to code subjects' attention to the scene. Recall McHugh's statement that when behavior is not consistent with assumptions, then "assumptions must be assessed against the scene." We took the concept of scene quite literally and devised the following questions to assess subject's concern with the scene:

REFERENCE TO PROPS: To what extent did the person indicate recognition of and/or awareness of the "props" of the experiment--camera, microphone, or mirror?
SITUATION AND INSTRUCTIONS: To what extend did the person make reference to being in an experiment, to the experimenters, to what the experimenters expected them to do, or to the experimental instructions--

what the people were told to do?

We did not attempt to code measurements of "anomie" discussed by McHugh (for example, statements that people cannotdo anything in the situation). But we did look for indicators of "disruption" of the presumed similarity of assumptions by coding several non-verbal behaviors:

Silence
Loudness
Trunk Position (leaning forward, straight, leaning back)
Major body movement
Fidgeting
Eye contact
Touching head

Hypotheses

> According to McHugh: Emergence predominates during orderly interaction. On the other hand, relativity predominates when order is challenged. This change probably results from the difference between behavior that is in accordance with assumptions and behavior that is not, in which case those assumptions must be assessed against the scene. An orderly interaction always contains preexisting assumptions which the participants document through the emergent course of the interaction. As discrepancies arise, however, these assumptions are thrown in doubt and rise to the surface. Actors resolve the doubt by assessing them against the immediate environment (p. 124).

The notion of challenge to take-for-granted assumptions is critical. In condition I there are clear assumptions which should go unchallenged. In condition II there also are clear assumptions, but the fact that those assumptions disagree should lead to the questioning of the assumptions at some point in time. In condition III there are no clear assumptions. The situation of "experimental conversation" is quite undefined; a set of assumptions must be created from the independent perspectives of the interactants.

Specifically we predict the following trends over time in the aggregate levels of the three general variables:

1. In Condition I (High Definition--Agreement): Emergence will be high and relativity low throughout the interaction.
2. In Condition II (High Definition--Disagreement): Emergence will be initially high, will decline at that point when the purpose of the interaction is called into question, then will rise as a definition becomes agreed upon; relativity will be initially low, increase and then decrease.

3. In Condition III (Low Definition): Emergence will be initially low and will linearly rise to a moderate level; relativity will be initially high and will linearly decline to a moderate level.

Where categories of talk constitute the criterion variable, there is the possibility that the subject of the conversation rather than the co-orientation state is the principal predictor. To examine this possibility we created two content conditions (A and B) within experimental condition I.

In condition I (A) subjects were given instructions to conduct a task-centered conversation. They were urged to use talk which may resemble "emergence" categories. In condition I (B) subjects were given instructions to conduct a relationship-oriented discussion. The instructions urged talk which may resemble "relativity" categories. In condition II, one subject was given the task orientation, the other was given the relationship orientation, thus generating disagreement on definition.

This design feature allows us to test the following hypothesis:

4. Coorientation state will be a better predictor of communication content than will the overt subject of the conversation.

Procedures

Experiment

The subjects were all undergraduate students enrolled in the basic speech course at The Pennsylvania State University. Ninety subjects (34 females, 56 males) recruited from a pool of volunteers, were randomly assigned to one of four experimental conditons and to same-sex pairs for conversation. During the first part of thesession, students signed informed consent forms and completed pretest questionnaires which included standard demographics, attitude items relating to grading policy (the discussion topic) and an attitude scale of "rhetorical sensitivity" (Hart, Eadie, and Carlson, 1975). The experimenter answered any questions (by repeating information from the written instructions), then took the subject to a room where he or she was met by another subject of the same sex. Both subjects had been told that they were to have a "preliminary discussion", see a film and then have a videotaped discussion. A television camera was prominently placed in the room, and was obviously covered, unplugged and turned away from the conversants. Actually, however, the first five minutes of the "preliminary discussion" were unobtrusively videotaped with a second camera located behind a one-way mirror. At the end of five minutes the subjects were interrupted, separated and given a post-discussion questionnaire dealing with perceptions of and attitudes toward the partner and the discussion topic. Subjects were then questioned to assess awareness of the procedures and hypotheses, informed of the deception and its purpose, and given the option of having the videotape destroyed. None so chose.

To begin sorting out the significant variables making up a highly defined situation we decided to focus on only one of the components of definition distinguished by Fink and Edison. Thus the induction was designed to manipulate the conversants' perceptions of the purpose and agenda for discussion. The three initial coorientation states experimentally induced (elaborating the technique developed by Fink and Edison) are:

1. High definition with Agreement (N = 34)--created by familiarizing each subject with a case study involving a professor's difficulty in assigning grades to several hypothetical students. The case gave information about grades earned as well as other more subjective data. Both subjects were

clearly told that the purpose of the conversation was either a) task oriented (N = 18) or b) social/relationship oriented (N = 16). In the task condition the problem presented was to determine the fair and equitable grade for each student. In the social condition, the problem presented was to understand how the conversation partner viewed the situation and the values behind his views.

2. High definition with Disagreement (N = 28)--formed by creating a high definition for each subject using the case study. In this condition, however, one subject was given task instructions for the discussion, the other social instructions. Each conversant should have felt confident that he/she knew what the agenda would be, but the subjects in fact should have had very different perceptions.

3. Low definition condition (N = 24)--created by informing each subject only that she/he would participate in a discussion with another student.

The issue chosen as a discussion topic (grading) was presumed to be salient to students and one with which each subject had some previous experience. Further, we preferred a problem which was concrete, data rich, and yet quickly and easily understood by subjects with varying intelligence. Grading dilemmas encompass both abstract philosophical issues and conrete data such as test scores and class averages. The inductions needed to be different enough to create actual differences in coorientation states, yet subtle enought to be undetected by subjects.

Content Analysis

The original videotapes were copied onto work tapes and edited to produce, for each of the forty-five five-minute conversations, ten thirty-second intervals separated by ten seconds of blank tape.

The nineteen content variables (see Category System above) were coded on five-point scales directly onto machine-readable coding forms. The coding for each conversation was divided among six coders. Each coder was responsible for six or seven of the nineteen variables for the person on either the left or the right. In addition, each conversation was independently coded a second time by a second set of six coders.

Forty-four students from advanced communication classes served as coders. The coders were scheduled in groups of six. There were ten three-hour coding sessions during a single week. At each session nine conversations (ninety thirty-second coding units) were coded.

Three training sessions (one for each set of six or seven variables) were scheduled during the week prior to the coding. Each coder attended one of the sessions. In addition, one warm-up conversation was coded at the beginning of each of the ten coding sessions.

Data Preparation and Analysis

The data comprised, for each subject in one of four experimental conditions,

ratings on a five-point scale by two independent coders for each of nineteen variables and ten thirty-second time segments, in addition to pre- and post-discussion questionnaire responses. The questionnaire responses are not discussed in this report.

For further analyses the data from both coders and from adjacent time segments were combined to form a single set of five one-minute scores for each subject on each variable. Two separate transformations were carried out, reflecting different assumptions about the level of measurement attained. One transformation created a nominal scale by dividing the five responses to each item into a zero-set and a one-set (and sometimes an "uncodable" set). The variable was considered "present" (one) in a minute if both coders responded in the one-set for at least one of the two thirty-second segments. Otherwise, the variable was "absent" (zero), unless both coders considered it "uncodable" in both segments. The second transformation produced an assumed interval scale by computing the mean of the two coders' responses over the two segments. Missing and "uncodable" responses were excluded from the computations.

Twelve of the nineteen variables were further combined in two sets to form indices of emergence and relativity (see Category System above). Assumed interval scales were created by averaging the variables, and nominal scales were created by counting the number of variables "present" and collapsing into categories of present (one) and absent (zero) for the combined variables. Emergence was considered present if two or more of the six emergence variables were present, and relativitiy was considered present if one or more of the six relativity variables was present. The less stringent standard for relativity was chosen because of the less frequent occurence of relativity variables.

The hypotheses were tested primarily by examining graphs of the variables over the five-minute conversation in the four experimental groups. This procedure, while it does not yield as neat a decision as might be desired, suits the complexity of the data and the state of research on this topic.

Results

Manipulation Check

In an attempt to verify our creation of distinctly different initial conditions, two coders analyzed the subjects' responses in the debriefing sessions. The coders looked at the subject's statements in response to the question, "What were you expected to do in the discussion?" in order to infer the experimental induction (low definition, task or social). For 84% of the subjects the coders agreed in their judgment of what induction the subject had been given. Coders then looked at answers to questions about the subject's degree of confidence that he knew what he was expected to do and the degree to which the subject's expectations about the experiment were fulfilled. Coders used this information to assess the experimental condition the subject was in (agree-task, agree-social, disagree, low definition). The coders' judgments as to the experimental conditions were in agreement 82% of the time. Although none of the subjects were able to identify the purpose of the study when asked to do so directly, it seems that their responses in the debriefing sessions gave the coders indications of similar

inductions and conditions.

In three of the four experimental conditions (low definition, agree-tasks, agree-social) the coders were correct in their judgments about the induction 91% to 97% of the time. The coders were correct as to the experimental condition 94% and 97% of the time. It appears then that the manipulations were successful in creating distinctly different expectations and perceptions of what happened in the conversation.

For the disagree condition, the coder's correct judgments were 84% and 86%. This indicates that although the different inductions worked, not all subjects reported sufficient disruption that the coders could tell that they were in the disagree condition. It is possible in these cases that although there was disagreement, the subjects cooriented to the extent that they were not even aware of any disruption.

In addition to the subject's report of his/her expectations and description of how the conversation went, the coders looked for signs of disruption of definition in the direct question, "Did you think the discussion was private or did you feel you were being observed?" Approximately 30% of the subjects expressed the feeling that they were watched. However, nearly all of those subjects said either that they had forgotten about the possibility or that it made no difference in their conversations. Other indicators of disruption were nearly absent except in the disagree condition. Thirteen percent of the subjects in the disagree condition made negative evaluations of their partners in the debriefing session. These comments ranged from rather mild violations of expectations ("He didn't talk as much as I expected.") to stronger judgments ("His attitudes shocked me." "He was apathetic.") Negative evaluations of the partner were almost totally absent in the other conditions.

Measurement Reliability

Reliability was assessed by correlating and cross-tabulating the responses of the two coders for each variable at the first, fifth and tenth thirty-second intervals.

The Pearson correlations ranged from an agerage of .8 (for trunk position and reference to props) to a negative average (for rightness). Six variables had average interval scale reliabilities of at least .5: silence (.6), loudness (.5), trunk position (.8), eye contact (.6), touching head (.7) and reference to props (.8).

Cramer's V (a nominal-level measure of association which ranged from zero to one) and percentage of agreement were computed for the cross-tabulations. Cramer's V was generally slightly higher than the Pearson correlations. The average percentage of agreement between coders ranged from 17% (for predictability) to 87% (for reference to props). Twelve variables attained at least 50% average agreement between coders: silence (58%), loudness (61%), reference to past (50%), reference to future (59%), disagreement (84%), trunk position (73%), major body movement (61%), eye contact (51%), touching head (61%), personal examples (76%), reference to props (91%), and reference to experiment (74%). When the cross-tabulations were collapsed to reflect the recoding into zero

and one for the nominal scales, there was (inevitably, since the definition of 'agreement" was being loosened) an improvement in percentage of agreement between coders. Eleven variables reached higher than 70% average agreement, and only one variable (rightness) remained under 50% average agreement.

Some of the reliability figures may be misleading, however, because certain behaviors occurred so rarely that their reliabilities are based on very few cases and/or extremely lo.. variance. Variables which are questionable on those grounds include: questions, disagreement, predictability, rightness, reference to props and reference to the experimental situation. Note that this is exactly the set of variables used to index relativity. We need not despair, however. The mere fact that these variables occurred infrequently condemns neither them nor the study. One simply must be careful in judging the reliability of these variables.

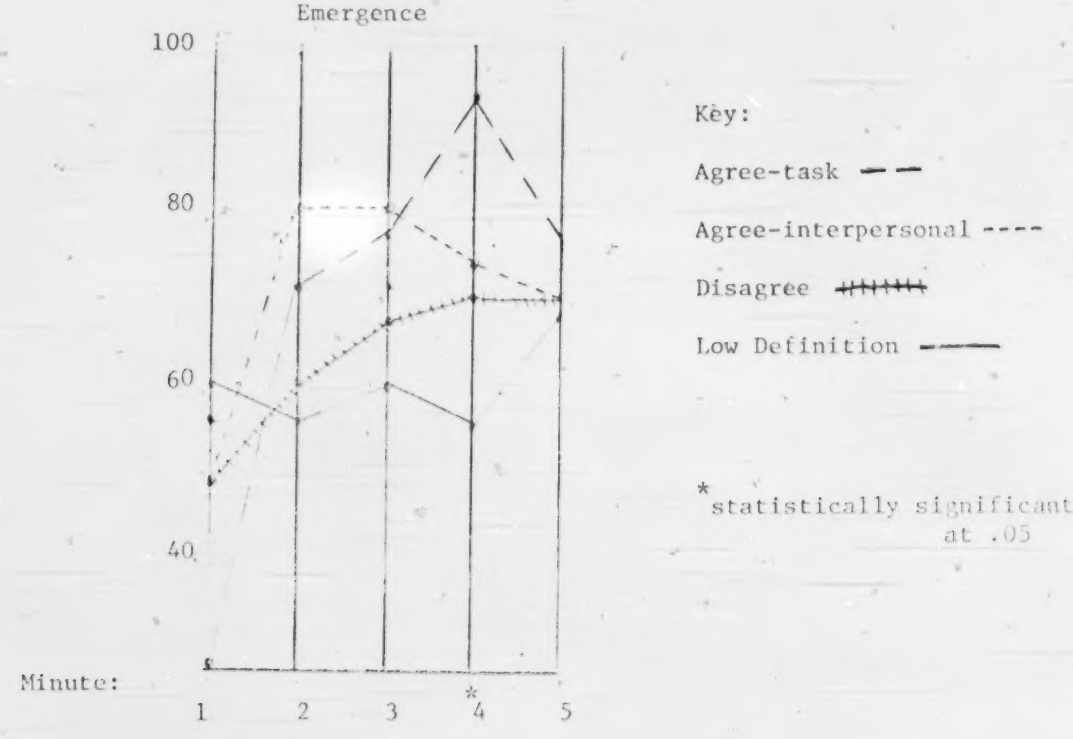
Reliability considerations led us to emphasize a nominal-level interpretation of our data. Accordingly, unless otherwise noted, the results are presented in terms of percentages of subjects for whom a variable was "present".

Results for Emergence Measures

We predicted that the process of coorientation in a situation where there was no agreement about the definition of the situation would be characterized more by "relativity talk" than by "emergence talk." Emergence should dominate during an orderly transaction in which the participants are clear and in agreement about the kind of communicative situation which is at hand.

We predicted in Condition I (high definition--agree), emergence would be high throughout the discussion. In the task Condition I emergence was low in minute one compared to the other conditions (See Figure 1). However, it rose steadily until

Figure 1



it was significantly above the other conditions by minute four. In the Interpersonal Condition I, emergence also rose substantially in the second minute so that it was above the other two conditions in minutes two, three, and four.

We predicted that in Condition II (high definition--disagree), emergence would be initially high because the participants presumably had the same definition of the situation. As the definition of the interaction was called into question, it would decline and then rise again as the situation was redefined. We found that the percentage of people engaging in emergence talk rose slightly over the five minute period from 57% to 71%. But the aggregate curve could conceal a fall and then rise in the presence of emergence if questionning of the situation came about at different times in the different dyads. Therefore, we plotted the mean amount of emergence in each dyad over the five minute period and looked for those dyads in which there was a fall in emergence followed by a rise toward the end of the five minutes (See Table 1). In five of the fourteen dyads there was a fall followed by some rise as predicted. In another five there was a rise initially followed by a fall with a slight rise again at the end of the five minutes. In other words, these dyads started out as the agree conditions dyads did, but after a minute or two there was a drop in emergence. In the remaining four dyads there was some rise, and then a drop in emergence, leaving open the possibility that the predicted rise in emergence might have occurred after five minutes.

In condition III (low definition) we predicted that emergence would be initially low. As the interactants defined for themselves the conditons and purpose of the encounter, emergence would rise to a moderate level. We found that although emergence was just higher than in the other conditions in minute one, it remained at a moderate level (about 60%) while emergence rose in the other conditions. It rose slightly in the last minute to approximately the level of the disagree and agree interpersonal condition.

Examination of the individual components of the emergence measure (confidence, agreement, elaboration, personal examples, references to past and future) indicates more specifically the differences in emergence among the three conditions.

The proportion of confidence in each condition was in the predicted direction (See Figure 2). We expected that it would begin high. As with most of the emergence measures, it did not begin high but rose steadily from minute one until it leveled off at minute five. It rose particularly in the agree-task condition. As was expected, confidence was lower in the disagree and low definition conditions. During the third minute there was a drop in confidence in the disagree condition as predicted. In the low definition condition only nine percent of subjects appeared "confident" during the first minute. This rose, as predicted, to a moderate level of 26%.

Another indicator of emergence was elaboration (Figure 3). These are comments used to compound and extend a conversational theme. Embellishments and details connect the speaker's comment to the previous conversation. Elaboration was highest in the first minute in the agree conditions. It rose until minute five when all the conditions were about the same. The disagree condition started low, but contrary to prediction, rose to approximately the level of the high definition conditions. The low definition condition had a low to moderate level of elaboration until the last minute. In minute 4 elaboration in the low definition

condition was significantly below the level of the other conditions. Contrary to prediction, the use of personal examples was found almost exclusively in the low definition condition (Figure 4). We judge this to be an artifact of the experimental manipulation. The low definition dyads had no case study to rely on as a source for topics in the conversation. They had only their personal experiences.

A fourth indicator of emergence was agreement (Figure 5). Statements which indicate that the interactants are in agreement with one another may be contextual or procedural. That is, they may make comments indicating that they agree on the viewpoint expressed by the other. They may also agree on the task procedures such as what they will talk about next. The agreement results are difficult to interpret because there is no consistent pattern of differences among the groups. Agreement was moderately low and rose slightly in all conditions. There is no consistent difference in the predicted directions among the groups.

References to the future are the fifth indicator of emergence (Figure 6). Statements which projected toward future behaviors or consequences of behaviors are indicators that the conversant is attempting to integrate the patterns of meaning developing in this conversation to the future. Statements about future talk tasks or interactions also indicate the respondents attempt to define this conversation as having meaning or making sense at the moment. In the agree-task condition, references to the future rose steadily from a moderate proportion at the beginning, took a slight dip in the fourth minute, and then rose again. This measure may be susceptible to topic differences, however, because there was not as much referencing the future in the interpersonal condition as in the task condition. In the disagree condition (where one subject presumed a task orientation and the other an interpersonal orientation) there was a moderate proportion of references. This suggests the future references may have come principally from those with the task orientation in the disagree condition.

In order to check this hunch we examined which of the two people in the disagree condition most often used references to the future. During minute one both people gave about the same proportion (task subjects 29%; interpersonal subjects 31%). In minute two 36% of task subjects referenced the future while only 21% of interpersonal subjects did so. The proportion of task subjects referencing the future rose to 50% by minute five. The proportion of interpersonal subjects referencing the future remained at 21%. Although the difference between these two groups is not statistically significant ($n = 28$), there is a clear pattern of increasing difference. Those who are oriented to a task tend to reference the future more often than those with an interpersonal orientation.

There was, as predicted, a low proportion of references to the future in the low definition condition.

We also coded references to the past as indicators of emergence. However, there were relatively few references to the past in any condition. Some references to the past were in the context of personal examples, which also turned out to be a weak indicator (Figure 7).

Results of Relativity Measures

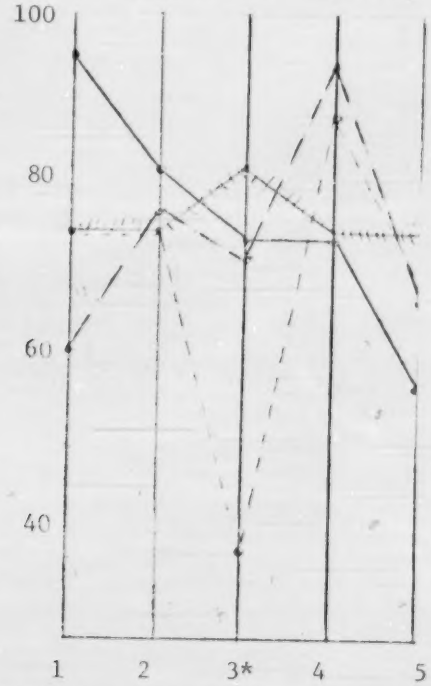
Following McHugh, we predicted that the process of coorientation in a situation where there was no agreement about the definition of the situation

would be characterized by "relativity talk" or verbal behavior in which people expressed their concern for the situation and their relationship to one another. Therefore we predicted that relativity would be low in Condition I (high definition-agree); relativity would be initially low in Condition II (disagree), and would rise as the conversation was disrupted by their lack of agreement on a definition of the situation; relativity would be initially high in Condition III (low definition) but would drop as they settled on a consensual definition.

Figure 8 shows the overall results for the relativity measures. The

Figure 8

Relativity



Key:

Agree-task — —

Agree-interpersonal - - - -

Disagree ++++++

Low Definition ——

*statistically significant at .05

subjects in Condition I (agree) had rather unstable relativity across the five minutes. While the general trends of the two agree conditions were similar, there was some difference, particularly in minute three. There was a generally rising proportion in the agree-task condition. There was a sharp fall in the agree-interpersonal condition in minute three followed by a rise and another fall. The only statistically significant difference was in minute three when only 38% of the agree-interpersonal dyads had any relativity coded.

In the disagree condition there was a relatively stable percentage of relativity coded. In minute three when the agree conditions had less relativity, the disagree condition had slightly more. The aggregate proportion can conceal trends in individual dyads. We predicted that relativity would increase at the time of disruption caused by different definitions. As with emergence, there is the possibility that because disruption occurs at different times for different dyads, the aggregate proportion of relativity obscures the pattern. Therefore, we plotted the means of the relativity scores for each dyad (See Table II). Eight of the fourteen dyads had the predicted curvilinear trend of relativity across time. There was a rise to a single peak followed by some drop-off. In another four cases there was no drop-off, leaving open the possibility that if the discussion had been analyzed beyond five minutes, there could have been a drop-off. In only two cases was the pattern clearly not as predicted;

in these there was an initially high level with a fall, then a rise.

In the low definition condition, the curve is as predicted. In 95% of the cases there was relativity coded during the first five minutes; the percentage drops off to 57% by minute five.

Of these two "projective" measures of relativity, the results for "predictability" are especially difficult to interpret (See Figure 9). There is no discernable pattern of differences between conditions. The results for rightness are more clearcut (See Figure 10). 100% of the low definition dyads discusses "rightness" during the first minute. Only 38% and 25% of the agree dyads did. By minute three, however, the percentage in all conditions is approximately the same and remains that way.

A second approach to measuring relativity was to examine ways in which subjects were seeking information about and matching their different positions. We found significant differences in the use of questions among the conditions (Figure 11). Those in the low definition condition used more questions, though at a declining rate (96% in minute one; 56% in minute five). There was also a declining rate of questions in the disagree and agree-interpersonal condition. The percentage in the task condition stayed about the same (varying only from 55% to 47%). There was virtually no "contrast of opinion" coded in any condition (Figure 12).

A third approach to measuring relativity was to code subjects' attention to the scene (Figure 13). As expected, those in the low definition condition were more concerned with "props" initially. Props were mentioned by 40% of the low definition dyads in the first minute. After minute three, however, props were not mentioned in any dyad. Twenty-four percent of the disagree dyads mentioned props in the first minute; only 11% and 6% of the agree dyads did so. There was little reference to props after the first minute in any dyad.

References to the experimental situation also tend to be found only in the early segments in all conditions (Figure 14). The exception to this is in minutes four and five, when references to the experimental situation jump in the disagree condition, as we predicted. In these dyads, the people seem to have discovered that their assumptions for the conversation were not making sense in terms of the partner's behavior, leading in a few cases to the question, "Wait. What did they tell you we were supposed to do here?"

Results for Nonverbal Measures of Disruption

We found no pattern in the differences of silence, loudness and head touching among conditions (See Figures 15, 16, and 17).

There were large differences in the trunk position among conditions. We thought that sitting back might indicata a "pulling out from" the discussion and hence be a measure of disruption. Those in the LD condition sat back while the others sat straight and leaned forward (Figure 18). Most of this is accounted for by the fact that in the three high definition conditions subjects had a written "case study" which they were discussing. Interestingly, however, about twice as many subjects in the disagree condition leaned back as in the agree conditions with the exception of minute four. Because the leaning back is more pronounced

than in either agree condition, this may be some indication of disruption.

From looking at the videotapes we expected to find subjects in the disagree condition moving their body position more. We noticed in informally reviewing the tapes, that when one subject would make a statement which the other should have found unreasonable within his set of assumptions about the situation, he would shift himself around in the seat. The systematically coded results did not reveal any pattern of difference, however (Figure 19). In the first minute 64% of disagree condition subjects shifted while only 44% of the others did. But in minute five 60% of LD subjects shifted (when presumably they had some consensual definition) while only about 30% of the others did.

Another possible indicator of disruption was fidgeting (see Figure 20). In general, low definition subjects fidgeted more throughout the discussion. With the exception of minute two when 61% of agree-task subjects were fidgeting, those in the disagree condition tended to fidget more often than those in the agree condition, but these differences were not significant.

There was a significant pattern of difference in eye contact (Figure 21). Those in the LD condition tended to maintain fairly steady eye contact. Subjects in the agree-interpersonal condition maintained contact most of the time (62% of the dyads). Just under half the subjects in the disagree condition maintained eye contact, though this rose in minute five. Subjects in the agree-task condition rarely looked at one another (from 17% to 27% of the dyads did so). This is one area where there is a difference between those subjects who were seeking to "get to know" the partner and those who assumed they were to do a problem-solving task only.

Summary of Results by Hypothesis

Figures 22 through 25 show the trends in relativity and emergence across time by condition. The absolute values of relativity and emergence should not be compared, for as explained previously the values have been derived differently. With this qualified in mind, observe how relativity and emergence vary within each condition across time.

Hypothesis I. We predicted that in Condition I (high definition-agree) emergence would be high and relativity low across time. Relative to the proportion of emergence found in other conditions, emergence was low in the agree condition, especially in the task condition. After watching subjects' responses to the full page of instructions we gave them in the agree condition, we found this pattern quite reasonable. Subjects were not permitted to take the instructions into the discussion with them. We believe they needed social reinforcement (via relativity talk) from the partner to make sure they understood what they were to do. So there was some relativity talk early in these discussions rather than emergence talk. But with the confirmation of instructions from the partner, they were able to develop an emerging theme for the conversation. Thus in both agree conditions there was a surge of emergence in relation to relativity after the first minute. Therefore, we conclude that our hypothesis was not confirmed. However, the failure to confirm was largely because we naively assumed that in agree conditions there would be an immediately high proportion of dyads with emergence. Our general reasoning that emergence would be higher in the agree

conditions than in the low definition or disagree condition hald for every minute except the first. This difference was statistically significant in minute four. There was a convergence in minute five which may reflect the establishment of a consensual definition of the situation. Contrary to prediction, relativity was not low throughout the Condition I interactions. It was rather unstable in both conditions, falling, then rising, then falling.

Hypothesis II. We predicted that in Condition II (Disagreement) emergence would be initially high and would fall while relativity would be low and would rise. Within most individual dyads this was the trend, as explained previously. The aggregate curves, however, show emergence rising slightly while relativity remains stationary across time. This pattern, although not predicted, is different from the agree conditions in which emergence rose sharply and relativity was quite unstable from minute to minute. One possible indicator of disruption in the disagree condition was the tendency of subjects to lean back more in this condition than in the agree conditions.

Hypothesis III. We predicted that in Condition III (low definition) emergence would be initially low and would linearly rise to a moderate level; relativity would be initially high and would decline to a moderate level. The results followed the predicted pattern. In addition, low definition subjects engaged in more large and small body movements than other subjects, indicating possible difficulty in creating a consensual definition.

Hypothesis IV. We predicted that coorientation state would be a better predictor of communication content than would the overt subject of the conversation. In the interpersonal-agree condition subjects were told their task was to form an impression of their partner. This indication might have led subjects to engage in more "relativity" type talk than in the task-agree condition. Hypotheses IV suggests that the talk in the interpersonal agree condition should resemble talk in the task-agree condition more than it resembles talk in the disagree condition. We found support for this hypothesis. Emergence in both agree conditions rose sharply during minute one and remained high. This was not the pattern in the disagree condition. Relativity was unstable in both agree conditions. It was almost stationary across time in the disagree condition.

There are two exceptions to this in the individual measures. Subjects in the interpersonal condition used fewer references to the future regardless of the orientation of the partner. Also subjects in the interpersonal condition maintained more eye contact with the partner than those in the task condition, regardless of whether the partner had been given a task or an interpersonal orientation. These two measures seemed to have been more sensitive to the induction of the individual person than the coorientation state of the dyad.

Discussion

The theoretical basis of this research is that human action is only indirectly a function of the environment. Humans choose their actions using a definition of the situation which they help to construct. The process of constructing a definition of a situation is a process of communication, or more specifically, coorientation. A definition of a situation is a psychological or intra-psychic phenomenon, but it is social in origin and consequence. The research reported here is one attempt to answer the broader question:

When and how is the psychological process of defining a situation reflected in interactive talk?

It seems to us that for researchers interested in this line of inquiry there are three paradigmatic questions:

(1) How is the psychological process called "defining a situation" to be operationalized and manipulated?

(2) How is "interactive talk" to be observed and analyzed?

(3) How can these two concepts be operationalized nontaulologically so that one can test for a relationship between them?

Regarding the first question, researchers such as McHugh have directed asked subjects to verbalize the psychic process of defining their situation. We attempted to investigate possible correlates of the process in subjects' "natural" talk with one another. Our attempts have given us insights into some useful and not-so-useful ways of answering the three questions above.

We judge our attempt to operationalize and minipulate the subjects' initial definition of the situation to be moderately successful. We were naive in believing that if we read subjects a detailed description of how to do a problem solving task, that we would ipso facto be providing high definition for the task. Some subjects in the agree condition reported that they were not quite sure of the instructions. This, of course, suggests what we already know, which was that one person cannot provide the definition for another. He can only provide clues to be interpreted by another.

A more serious problem we faced concerns the separation of the content of the definition from the consensus state. In our experiment, one must ask whether the problem solving task and the interpersonal task are equally clear in potential definition. Did we provide clues for a clearer definition in one than the other? We believe that the use of at least two different kinds of agree conditions is absolutely necessary in this research. Moreover until sufficient replications are done to allow researchers to control for the topics of the agree condition conversations, we shall be unsure whether content or consensus state is the more important predictor of observed differences in talk.

The second question asks how interactive talk should be observed and analyzed. Emergence and relativity have great intuitive appeal as components of talk which define the situation. The experience of this research has not substantially shaken our faith in the concepts, but it has led us to glimpse subtleties of the concepts to which we were initially blind. We believe that future research could profit from greater subtlety in three areas.

The first area is conceptual. A problem discussed above is the interaction between content of definition and amount of definition, perhaps reflected in the results for asking questions and eye contact, among other categories. More fundamentally, we suspect that coorientation toward a definition of the situation may occur rather independently at two or more levels. For example, it seems that asking a question must always be, in some sense, an instance of relativity. Yet in certain kinds of situations, such as interviews, examinations and initial interactions between strangers, asking questions may be very much a part of the

part of the emergent definition of the situation. How, then, does one enter "asking questions" on the balance sheet of emergence and relativity? We may need to keep separate books for at least two levels of situational definition, a "direct" level and a "meta" level. Perhaps these correspond to the familiar "content" and "relationship" levels of communication. Thus a question in an interview might be relativity at the direct level but emergence at the metalevel.

A second area in which increased subtlety is called for is that of coding procedures. The intercoder reliability results show that the coding procedures used in this study were too crude. Fink and Edison have demonstrated that intensively trained coders can produce reliable ratio-scale judgments of interaction variables. But the Fink and Edison approach can be very expensive (especially for large data sets) and is rather restrictive as to the form of measurement. Ratio-type judgments may not be appropriate for all variables and purposes. More intensive training of our coders, however, would increase precision, both by increasing coder understanding of the variables and by permitting the use of a time segment shorter than thirty seconds as the coding unit. The production of written transcripts of the conversations is an expensive step, but, we now feel, a necessary one. The transcripts could be used to enhance the accuracy of coding by time segment. They also would permit use of the utterance, rather than a time segment, as the coding unit for content analysis. That, in turn, would make possible genuine interaction analysis or stochastic modeling of the data.

We come, then, to data analysis, the third and final area in which future research might profit from greater subtlety. Students of communication have increasingly adopted analytic techniques that recognize the character of communication as process. Two models, alternative means of systematically describing process, have attracted much attention. One is the stochastic model, which requires discrete data; the other is the dynamic systems model, which requires metric data. Although both models can claim in principle to cover the whole field, it is clear that, in most of their practical applications, stochastic models have been best adapted to the description of what we may call "micro-processes"--the probabilities with which individual acts of various kinds will occur in the context of other kinds of acts. The dynamic systems model, on the other hand, seems best adapted to describing "macro-processes"--the overall trends of variables throughout an interaction or larger unit. The present study, while it neither meets the strongest assumptions nor employs all the mathematical paraphernalia of the dynamic systems approach, nevertheless is in that tradition. It seems probable that some aspects of the process of coorientation toward a definition of the situation are "micro-processes" that would be more easily captured by a context-dependent than by a time-dependent model. An obvious instance of this is our attempt to demonstrate disruption of definition in the disagree condition. Our findings suggest that the disruption occurred as predicted in most of the dyads, but occurred at different times in different dyads, thus tending to flatten the aggregate curve. Further research should explore both stochastic and dynamic systems approaches in an effort to determine which aspects of the process are most easily captured by each sort of model.

The final paradigmatic question points to the need for the psychological process of defining the situation be separated operationally from the interactive process (conversation between subjects). The idea here is to be able to say that the psychological process is related to (and perhaps caused by or causing) the talk. McHugh investigated the psychological process outside a genuine interactive

situation. We observed talk but have assumed that the subjects were negotiating a definition of the situation. A complete study should do both. Stimulated recall might be a method for investigating both. Subjects are shown their conversation and asked to describe how they are interpreting the other person and why they are saying what they are saying. In this way the researcher could describe the psychic process and the interactive process separately so that the relationship of the two might then be investigated.

References

Fink, Edward L. and Nadyne G. Edison. "Definition of the Situation and Interactional Continuity: An Experimental Analysis." A paper to be presented at the Annual Convention of the International Communication Association, 1976.

Goffman, Erving. The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life. Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1959.

Goffman, Erving. Encounters: Two Studies in the Sociology of Interaction. New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1961.

Goffman, Erving. Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face-to-Face Interaction. Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1967.

Hart, Roderick P., William F. Eadi and Robert E. Carlson. "Rhetorical Sensitivity and Communication Competence." A paper presented at the Annual Convention of the Speech Communication Association, 1975.

Kelly, George A. A Theory of Personality: The Psychology of Personal Constructs. New York: Norton, 1963.

Laing, R. D., H. Phillipson and A. R. Lee. Interpersonal Perception: A Theory and a Method of Research. New York: Harper & Row, 1966.

McHugh, Peter. Defining the Situation: The Organization of Meaning in Social Interaction. New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1968.

McLeod, Jack M. and Steven H. Chaffee. "Interpersonal Approaches to Communication Research." American Behavioral Scientist, 16 (4, March-April, 1973), 469-499.

Mead, George H. The Philosophy of the Act. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1938.

Newcomb, Theodore M. "An Approach to the Study of Communication Acts," The Psychological Review, 60 (November, 1953), 393-404.

Scheff, Thomas J. "Toward a Sociological Model of Consensus," American Sociological Review, 32 (1, February, 1967), 32-46.

Thomas, William I. "The Definition of the Situation," in Jerome G. Manis and Bernard N. Meltzer (Eds.) Symbolic Interaction: A Reader in Social Psychology. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1967.

Individual Components of Emergence Measure

Figure 2

Confidence

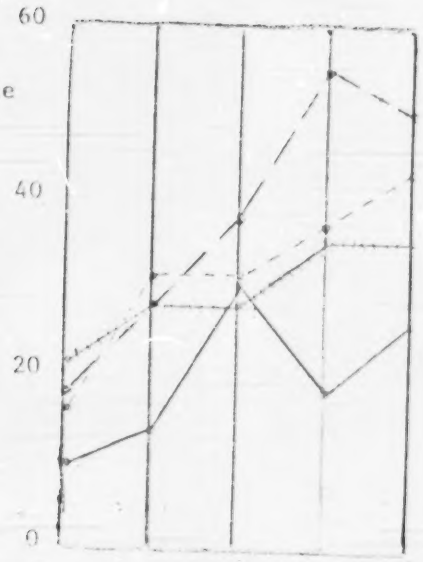


Figure 3

Elaboration

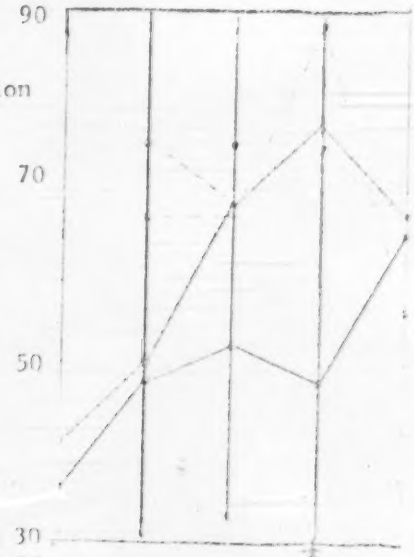


Figure 4

Personal Examples

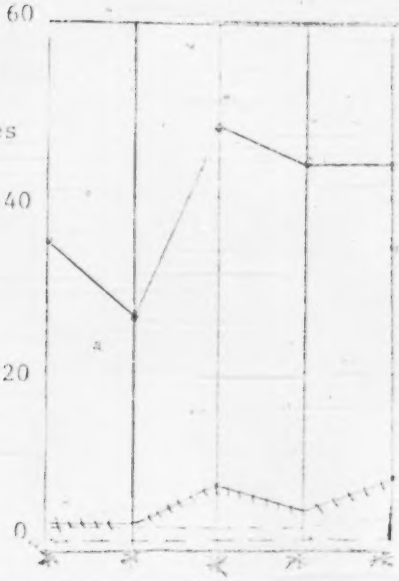


Figure 5

Agreement

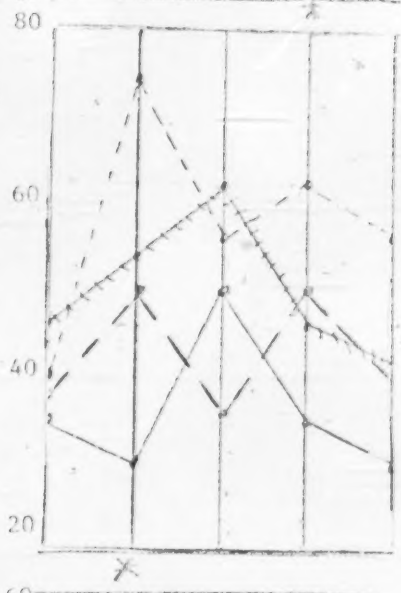


Figure 6

References to Future

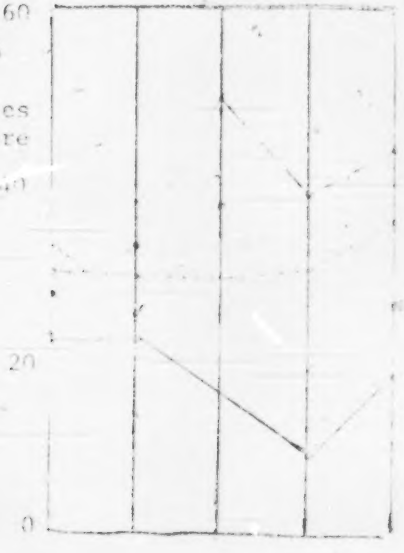


Figure 7

References to Past

AT

AI

D

LD

* statistically significant .05 level

Individual Components of Relativity Measure

Key:
AT
AI
D
LD

Figure 9
Predictability

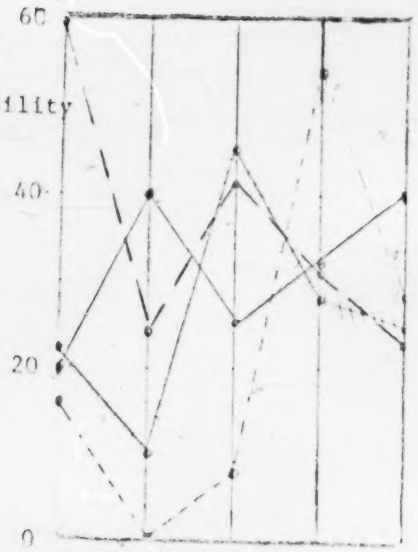


Figure 10
Rightness

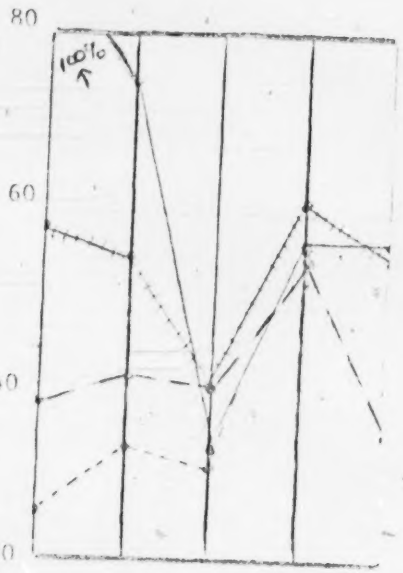


Figure 11
Questions

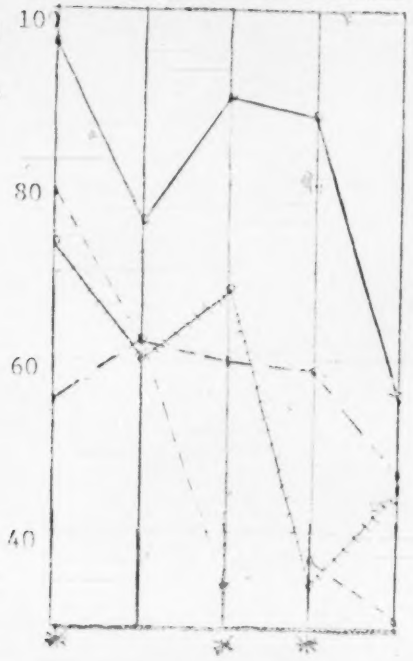
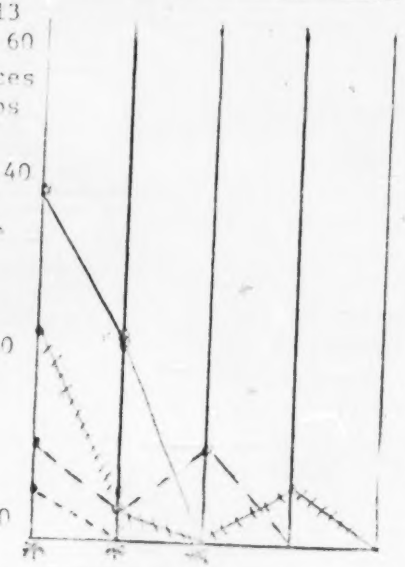


Figure 13
References to Props



Fugure 12
Contrasts of Opinion

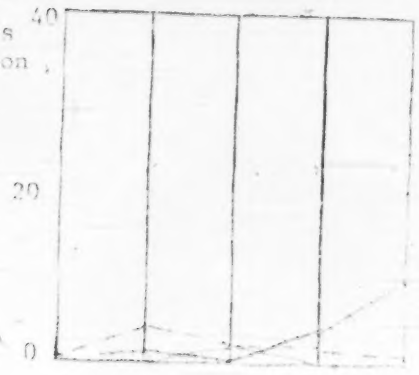


Figure 14
REferences to situation

* Statistically significant @ .05 level

Non-verbal Measures

Figure 15

Silence

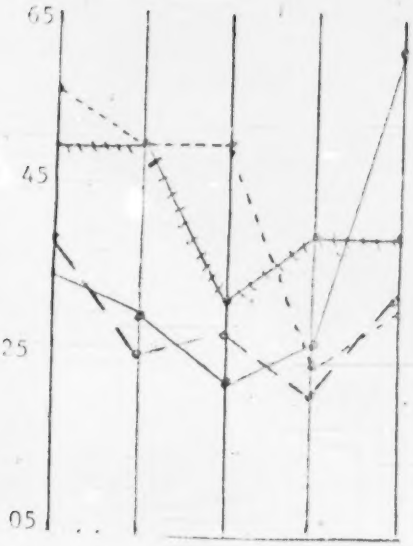
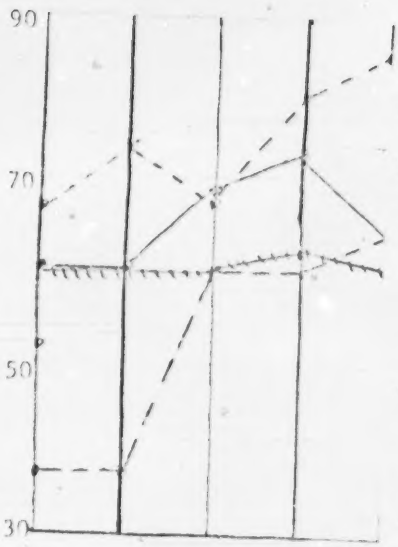


Figure 16

Loudness



Key

AT

AI

D

LD

Figure 17

Head Touching

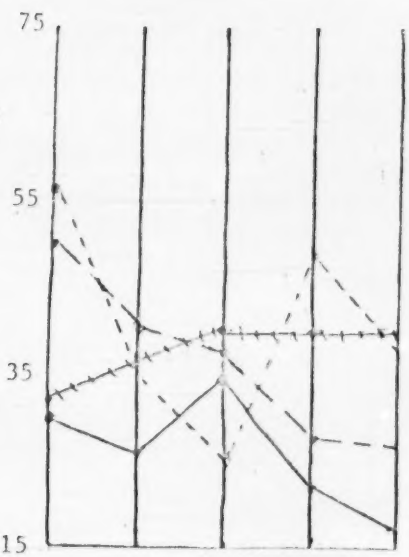


Figure 21

Eye contact

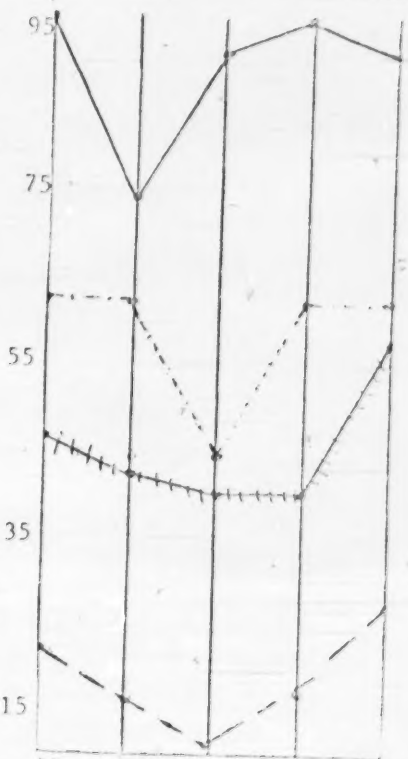


Figure 19

Major Body Movement

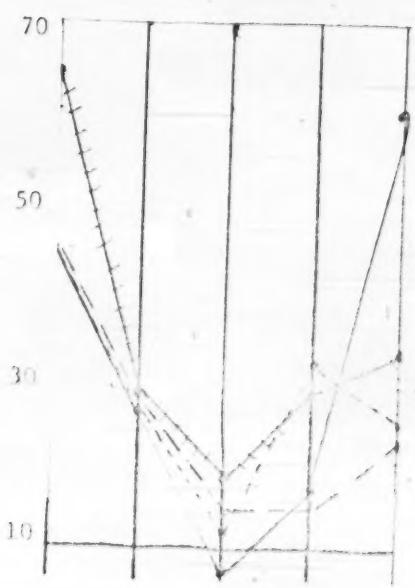
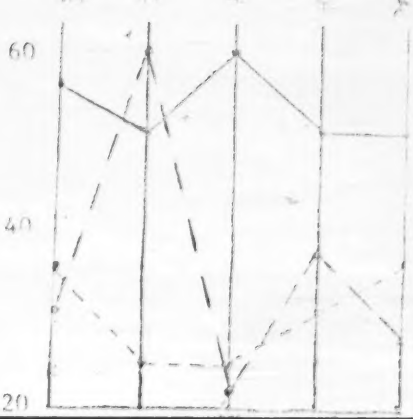


Figure 20

Fidgeting



Results by Hypothesis

H_1: Agree, Interpersonal

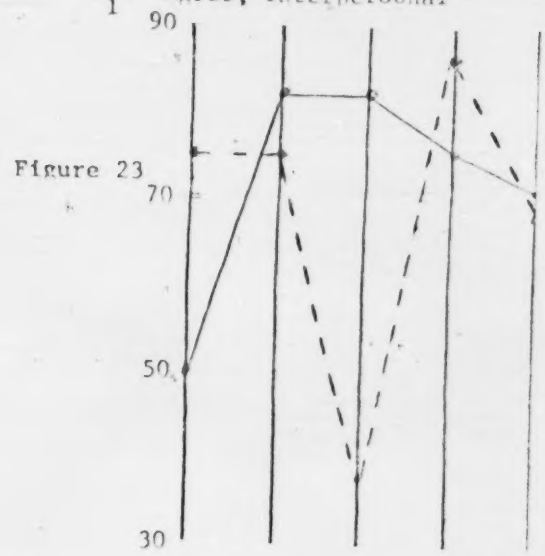


Figure 23

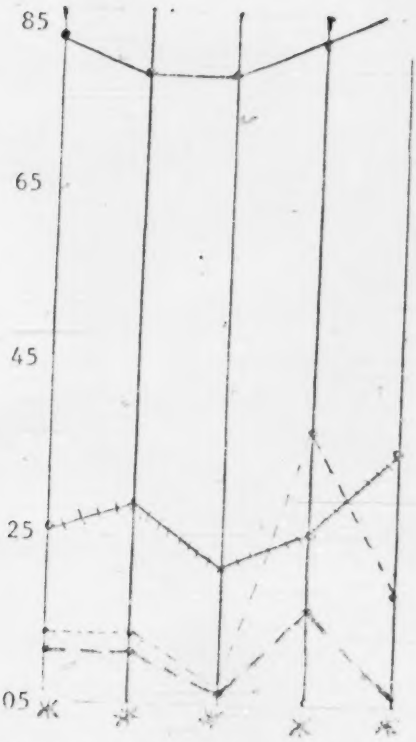


Figure 18

Trunk Position

* statistically significant α .05 level

H_2: Disagree Condition

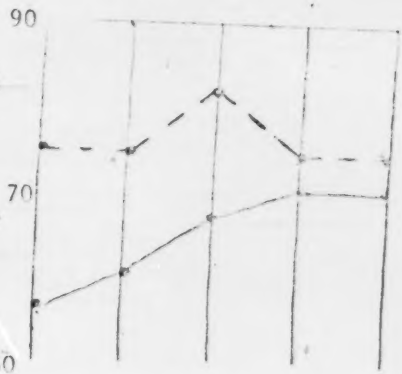


Figure 24

H_1: Agree, Task Condition

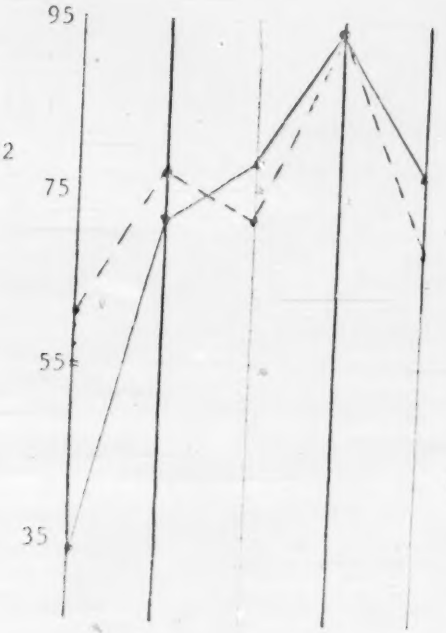


Figure 22

H_3: Low Definition Condition

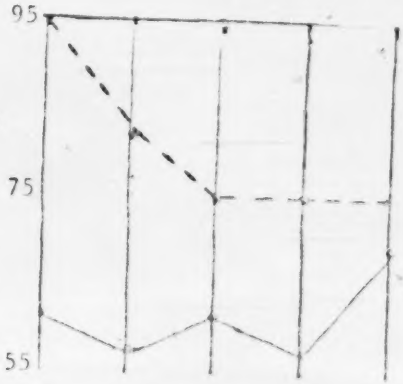


Figure 25

KEY: EMERGENCE ———

RELATIVITY - - - - -

Table I

Mean Emergence in Disagree Dyads

Time Period:		I	II	III	IV	V
Dyad:	1	2.75	2.69	2.75	2.81	2.92
	2	2.46	2.65	2.47	2.49	2.67
	3	2.23	2.15	2.42	2.46	2.34
	4	2.48	2.65	2.79	2.81	2.79
	5	2.81	2.88	2.92	2.96	2.75
	6	2.16	2.27	2.60	2.71	2.81
	7	2.60	2.90	2.71	2.79	2.73
	8	2.71	3.02	2.88	3.08	3.04
	9	2.54	2.85	2.81	2.79	2.88
	10	2.75	2.79	2.85	2.63	2.73
	11	2.21	2.25	2.75	2.71	2.69
	12	2.54	2.65	2.40	2.46	2.54
	13	3.13	2.14	3.25	2.31	3.08
	14	2.77	3.04	3.15	3.89	3.21

Table II

Mean Relativity in Disagree Dyads

Time Period:		I	II	III	IV	V
Dyad:	1	1.77	2.04	1.94	2.38	2.54
	2	1.90	2.04	2.27	2.35	2.56
	3	2.46	1.58	2.13	1.63	1.58
	4	1.40	2.08	2.19	1.90	1.88
	5	1.69	2.27	2.67	2.44	2.17
	6	0.88	1.83	1.83	2.25	1.69
	7	2.06	2.08	2.29	2.15	2.10
	8	2.13	2.31	2.21	2.46	2.40
	9	2.13	2.10	2.17	2.17	2.13
	10	1.60	1.88	2.29	2.19	1.75
	11	1.77	1.85	2.48	2.00	2.13
	12	1.88	2.01	2.25	1.40	1.90
	13	2.40	2.40	2.27	2.81	2.54
	14	1.94	1.52	2.04	1.50	1.73